

Erie County Opiate Epidemic Task Force Meeting Minutes



Location: Erie County Fire Training Academy
Date: Monday, May 15, 2017
Time: 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Attendees: John Gaeddert, ECDOH; Elizabeth Freas, EIB; Kate Chudoba, WNY United; Bob Whitney; Dawn Vanderkooi, 21 WNY; Allexxia Mergenhagen, ECCPASA; Melissa Studley, Hillside; Debra Smith, ECOETF; Karl Wende, SUNY Buffalo State; Sharon Mentkowski, FBI; Alan Delmerico, SUNY Buffalo State; Frank Scarpinato, ECDOH; Lynne Dixon, EC Legislature

Agenda items

1. Welcome: several new and returning attendees
2. Since last we met...
 - a. The billboards are up! (Funded through a CDC grant, by way of the NYSDOH) And they look good.
 - b. "Talk With Your Mouth Full": A cable-access show airing on WBBZ. Karl, Deb, Frank, (someone else), all participated in a recent episode.
 - i. The episode will air on Sunday, June 11, 2017 at 6:00 PM.
 - ii. The mayor of Dunkirk has reached out to us to ask if it's possible to get the episode subtitled in Spanish. (This leads into a larger question of "can we get our materials translated into other languages," whether it's through the International Institute or other local organizations.)
 - c. Deb Smith and John Flickinger have met with doctors at the Buffalo Medical Group: there is interest in a forum for local physicians and physician extenders. It may be possible to host it through an organization that can offer CMEs.
 - d. The last Prescription Drug Drop-Off event netted approximately 5.4 tons of drugs
 - i. Only a fraction of that is illicit opioids, but removing this from the waste stream is good for local waterways.
 - e. The local organization "First Step" now has stabilization beds and some type of medication-assisted therapy (MAT). (Details are spotty, but Deb Smith is working to find out more.)
3. Upcoming...
 - a. WNY United is hosting a forum in Springville tonight (May 15th) with the help of Sue Boyle.
 - b. Walk of Hope scheduled for Saturday, May 20th in Cazenovia Park.
 - i. Event is not just for opiate addiction; it also addresses suicide and other issues.
 - c. The FBI is looking for programming for the Summer Youth Program.
4. School Messaging
 - a. A sit-down date was picked for teachers and administrators to hammer out the messaging
 - b. Presenters would be available in late August/ early September to speak in local schools
 - c. The ECDOH has a lot of local data, the program might benefit from that

- d. The YRBS would have some data for youth, but “opiate usage” might get muddled into “all prescription drugs”
 - e. Old data (even from 4-5 years ago) isn’t very useful for this epidemic
 - f. Larger question of “are opiate OD deaths being under-reported”: we know from experience that sometimes they aren’t logged as opiate deaths
 - g. Question about “How many people are in treatment;” sounds like the answers may not be in any one place?
 - i. OASAS may have top-level data
 - ii. Erie County has a Risk Indicator Database (<http://erieridb.org/>) that may help
 - iii. Renaissance House or Kids Escaping Drugs may have some data
5. Drug Court Meeting: happened Wednesday the 10th.
- a. Judges from Buffalo, Amherst, Lackawanna, and Tonawanda were present
 - b. There is interest in having these meetings on a recurring (quarterly) basis
 - c. We now have a designated opiate court! (Apparently it was just begun a week or two ago.)
 - d. One of the topics was catching “lower risk” people, such as first offenders, before they become heavily-addicted repeat offenders
 - i. One of the favored routes is to send the offender into a drug treatment program; however, the judges want the person to finish out the program
 - ii. There’s concern in the workgroup that if a person with an SUD is detoxing/ has detoxed in jail, there are not enough tools to help them once they get released!
 - e. Most of the judges were compassionate towards people with addictions, not all
 - i. Apparently some judges won’t “graduate” people from the program if they’re still on MAT such as methadone. (This runs contrary to established medical wisdom.)
 - ii. Some courts want to force people who have undergone overdoses to be routed through the drug courts. Even if people agree that people with SUDs should be “caught before they slip through the safety net,” that’s a far cry from forcing the person into the court system (see the State of Florida’s “Marchman Act”).
 - f. The suggestion was offered to create an “In Case of Emergency” (ICE) card that a person with SUD could complete and have on hand in case of an OD. Alternate forms might be a bracelet or other such accessories.
 - i. Many cell phones now have the “Emergency Contact” info, but there are limits as to what law enforcement can do with a person’s phone
 - ii. We recognize the limits; namely, the person must be able to admit that they have a problem, and pre-fill a card for others to find. It might be akin to the mental health campaign of “Just Tell One,” whereby a person who recognizes their own weaknesses can reach out to a specific person.
 - iii. Erie County is already inserting a card for the Crisis Services Hotline in every Narcan kit we distribute, so whether or not we pursue the ICE card idea, we recognize the need for outreach.
6. Next Meeting: Monday, June 19, 2017, Erie County Fire Training Academy